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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1008 1920823  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 100823Z JUL 08  
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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their July 10 news coverage on Taiwan's falling stock index and its economic situation; on Taiwan's efforts to strive for more international space; and on the screening process of the Examination Yuan candidates nominated by President Ma Ying-jeou. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" commented on cool-down in Taiwan-U.S. relations and said any improvement in cross-Straits relations will certainly alter the United States' assessment of Taiwan's security. End summary.

"Taiwan-U.S. Relations Cooling Down"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (7/10):

".... Since the KMT returned to power, [Taipei's policy] focus has been shifted to cross-Straits relations. The United States, on the other hand, is busily engaged in its elections, so as a result, bilateral relations have gradually turned cool. The most evident change [in Taiwan-U.S. relations] was nothing more than the deadlocked [U.S.] arms procurements issue. In an effort to show his determination to strengthen [Taiwan's] national defense, Ma Ying-jeou has pledged openly that he would raise Taiwan's defense budget to three percent of the island's GDP. But Washington believes that Taiwan has proactively requested that the arms procurements be shelved due to political factors on the island -- an account that Taipei has denied. But sources revealed that the Taiwan side has not proposed a formal Letter of Request [to the United States with regard to the arms deal], and Washington therefore has no reason to issue a Letter of Acceptance to Taiwan. It is akin to a couple, each of which has his or her own agenda and is on the verge of breaking up, but neither dares to speak clearly about it.

"Taiwan has been launching all kinds of lobbying campaigns in Washington in hopes of winning the United States' support for Taiwan to participate in various international organizations. Such lobbying campaigns for Taiwan's international space have almost all been put on hold now. There appears to be no conflicts between Taipei and Washington now, but there seems to be a lack of passion for each other either. The images of Taiwan and the United States have gradually disappeared from each other's radar screens. ...

"The United States will not be more concerned for Taiwan's security than the island itself. Any improvement in cross-Straits relations will certainly alter the United States' assessment of Taiwan's security. If China's influence in the Taiwan Strait grows significantly, the United States will surely have to adjust its Asia policy. ..."

YOUNG